

Duration of common respiratory conditions

It can be helpful with patients to explain how long their symptoms may take to resolve. If you let people know that an acute cough could last up to one month, it reduces/stops people returning a few days later wanting antibiotics.

For example, a 2013 study¹ showed that in 90% of children:

- earache was resolved in eight days,
- sore throat between two and seven (but remember antibiotics for 10 days in high-risk rheumatic fever groups),
- croup resolved in two days,
- bronchiolitis in 21 days,
- acute cough in 25 days,
- common cold in 15 days,
- non-specific respiratory tract infection symptoms resolved in 16 days.

Note: Study populations varied in duration of symptoms before study onset. The data came from the control arm of intervention trials and observational studies. Any symptomatic treatment was assumed to not shorten symptoms.

Reference

- [Duration of symptoms of respiratory tract infections in children: systematic review](#) BMJ (2013)

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